

27
GENERAL ORDERS, }

No. 25.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Washington, January 29, 1863.

The Secretary of War with great regret announces the decease of another veteran officer, Colonel JOHN J. ABERT, late Chief of the United States Corps of Topographical Engineers, who died at his residence in this city, the 27th instant, at an advanced age.

Colonel ABERT entered as a cadet of the Military Academy in the year 1808, only six years after its first establishment by law. Leaving the Academy in 1811, he was from then until November, 1814, employed in the War Office. While thus engaged, he volunteered as a private soldier for the defense of the Capital; and his services on that occasion were acknowledged by conferring upon him a land warrant, under the existing laws. He was appointed Topographical Engineer, with rank of Major, November 22, 1814. At that time there was no organized corps of those officers, but they formed a part of the General Staff and served with generals in the field. After the close of the war they were employed in surveys of the sea-coast and inland frontiers, reporting to the Chief of Engineers; and the results of their labors were collected in a Topographical Bureau, established in the War Department May 5, 1820, as a part of the Engineer Department, under charge of Major Roberdeau. On the reorganization of the Army in 1816, Major ABERT was retained. In 1824 he was brevetted Lieutenant Colonel for ten years' faithful service in one grade; and at the death of Colonel Roberdeau, February 12, 1829, he was appointed to the charge of the Topographical Bureau. As the duties of his Bureau increased in magnitude and importance, Colonel ABERT exerted himself to cause it to be made a distinct branch of the War Department, which he effected June 22, 1831. At this time his corps consisted of six majors and four captains by brevet, and six civil engineers; besides which some twenty subalterns of the line of the Army were detailed on topographical duty under his orders. At length, by act of Congress approved July 7, 1838, the present Corps of Topographical Engineers was organized and created one of the Staff Corps of the Army, with the officer to whose fostering care and judicious management it mainly owed its existence, for its colonel and chief. Colonel ABERT was, in fact, at the head of his corps for upwards of thirty-two years, until he

was honorably retired from active duty the 11th September, 1861, having become incapacitated by long and faithful service from further attendance at his office.

The Army and the country will not need to be reminded of the vast interest and value attached to the operations of this corps since its organization. The geographical and other information concerning this continent which its officers have collected and published, has challenged the admiration of the scientific world; while the practical benefit of their labors has been felt in nearly every State and every Territory; the whole forming a proud monument to him who was its founder.

As a citizen and a man, Colonel ABERT was remarkable for the steadfastness of his friendships, for his candor and unostentatious hospitality. Equally unostentatious, but no less sincere, was the simple piety which supported his declining years, and left behind an example which the proudest soldier may not be ashamed to follow.

In respect to his memory, the officers of Topographical Engineers will wear the badge of mourning for thirty days.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

L. THOMAS,
Adjutant General.

OFFICIAL:

Assistant Adjutant General.